

that when the Northern Shoveler hybridises with one of the less specialised of the "Blue-winged Ducks", such as the Cinnamon Teal, the white breast shield is totally suppressed, whereas when the cross occurs with a more specialised species of the group such as the Red Shoveler, then the white breast shield is merely reduced to a white neck ring.

(c) the general colour of the cheeks and crown resembles the Cape Shoveler, but with traces of the characteristic blue-green of the Australian Shoveler.

(d) the blue and white long scapulars are approximately as highly developed as in the Australian Shoveler, while the pale chestnut short scapulars with strong dark bars are similar to the Red Shoveler.

(e) traces of black in the under tail-coverts are similar to the Cape Shoveler.

The findings in this hybrid strongly support Delacour's grouping of the "Blue-winged Ducks" as a distinct evolutionary line and our own views already expressed elsewhere, that reversionary characters exposed by hybridisation have evolutionary significance (Harrison, 1964).

#### *Acknowledgments*

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#### References:

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## **On the roosting habits of the Black-winged Kite, *Elanus caeruleus* (Desfontaines) in Tanzania**

by A. M. MORGAN-DAVIES

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The vegetation of much of Northern Tanzania, immediately south of Arusha, is open grassland with scattered thorn trees of varying density from single isolated trees to thick "bush" country.

For the short period of March and April 1964 it was common to see large numbers of *Elanus caeruleus* hovering or gliding over the open grasslands in search of food, and for many days it was a mystery where these hundreds of birds roosted at night. As a professional collector of birds for Zoological Gardens I spent a certain amount of time collecting at night and it was on one such occasion, in company with my wife, that the spotlight picked out a small isolated *Balanites aegyptiaca* tree. From a distance of two hundred yards the tree looked as if it were covered with snow but on closer examination was found to be a roosting colony of no less than eighty *Elanus caeruleus*. The tree was approximately ten feet high with a spread of about six feet compelling the birds to congregate so close they were almost wing to wing. The amount of excrement, accumulated possibly over a period of years, added to the illusion of a snow-covered tree.

The spot-light, directed on to the roosting birds at a range of six to

ten feet, did not cause any considerable alarm and, like many Raptores, provided there was no sudden sound or movement, they remained undisturbed to the extent they could be almost picked from the tree by hand. They made no attempt to savage their captor with their beak but freely used their talons. When finally disturbed the flock would scatter in all directions but soon re-align on any suitable bush or other thick patch of vegetation that projected above the grass-line.

A second similar, but slightly smaller, roosting colony was found the same night a short distance away.

Judging from the number of roosting birds congregated on to these two trees on this and subsequent nights, the species appears to favour certain particular roosting trees on to which they converge each evening from a radius of many miles.

From the limited literature available to me I am unable to find records of any similar large scale communal roosting habits of other Raptores and, on this basis, I have recorded these observations.

Mr. R. K. Brooke has recently recorded (*The Ostrich* xxxvi, p. 43) observations on the roosting habits of *Elanus caeruleus* in the Salisbury District of Rhodesia. The bird here 'habitually roosts in small flocks' in reeds and in a bed of young Carolina Poplars, the number varying from five to thirty.

## Winter habitat of *Acrocephalus dumetorum* Blyth

by G. DIESELHORST

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K. D. Smith (1964) reports on the finding of a skin of Blyth's Reed Warbler from Eritrea in the collection of the British Museum which had previously been misidentified as *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*. He suggests that other specimens observed wintering in the swamps (mangroves) might have been *dumetorum*. I would think the latter conclusion is not very well substantiated by what is known of the habitat of Blyth's Reed Warbler in the Asiatic winter quarters of the species. Whistler (1949) gave an excellent account of the winter habitat in India: 'The observer in India must not be deceived by the name of Blyth's *Reed-Warbler*, for on passage and in winter quarters the neighbourhood of water has no special attraction for this species. In winter it is a bird of thick cover, found in any type of country other than thick forest . . .'. About the same is mentioned, for instance, by Ali (1953) for South-west India and by Henry (1955) for Ceylon. I myself watched and collected the bird on passage in the Nepal Duns in April 1962 in exactly the same type of country where it was common at times. I found the species in thick cover of secondary growth and in the outskirts of forest, but I never met with it in swampy localities in the same area and season. The behaviour of the bird reminded me more of a *Sylvia* of the *borin* type than of a Reed Warbler (*A. scirpaceus*). It would be surprising if the species keeps to a different general type of habitat if it really occurred in Africa other than quite exceptionally.

### References:

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